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ABSTRACT

While female victims of sexual abuse have received increased attention, male victims continue to be overlooked. Recognition of effects of sexual abuse has been an important step in increasing identification of and treatment for victims of abuse. To assess the characteristics of male victims, sexually abused male (N=13) and female (N=16) adolescents were compared with a contrast group of junior and senior high school students (N=35). Subjects completed psychometric tests assessing clinical syndromes along with subjects' drive or need levels on various characteristics. Compared with the contrast group, sexually abused adolescents perceived life to be more meaningless, perceived less control over their lives, experienced more depression, lacked self-efficacy, and reported less trust of others, among other characteristics. Importantly, few differences were found between male and female abused adolescents, suggesting that the experience and consequences of abuse may not be significantly different for males and females. There clearly is a need for more extensive research to examine the potential differences between sexually abuse males and females. The course of treatment may be different for males and females since males will express their distress differently, with males being more external and females more internal. (Author/ABL)

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Psychological Characteristics of Adolescent Males Who Have Been Sexually Abused

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Psychological Characteristics of Adolescent Males Who Have Been Sexually Abused

Recent reviews have focused on the serious side effects of sexual abuse of children. The most common initial effects (i.e., within two years after termination of the abuse) include fear, anxiety, depression, anger, hostility, and inappropriate sexual behavior (Browne and Finkelhor, 1986). Long term effects include depression, self-destructive behavior, anxiety, isolation, and a tendency toward revictimization. These effects, along with acting out and pseudomaturity, have been noted among both children and adolescents, severely interfering with the victims' development (Alter-Reid, Gibbs, Lachenmeyer, Sigal, & Massoth, 1986).

Recognition of these effects has been an important step in increasing identification of and treatment for victims of abuse. However, most of this attention has focused exclusively on female victims. Browne and Finkelhor (1986) limited their review only to female victims because of the paucity of clinical and, especially, empirical studies with male victims. This is likely due to underreporting of sexual abuse towards males (Johnson & Shrier, 1987). Among other possible reasons, Sebold (1987) suggested that, in families which have more than one child who has been sexually abused, a male victim may often be overlooked if there is a female who has also been abused.

While female victims are reported to outnumber male victims by four to one (Alter-Reid, et al., 1986), overlooking these male victims ignores a large number of sexual abuse victims. Finkelhor (1984) indicates that among boys under age 13 or before puberty the rate of abuse may be between 2.5 and 5 percent, resulting in about one million boys presently under the age of 13 being victimized. Even this may be an underestimate. Groth and Birnbaum (1979) reported a study by the Oakland County Homicide Task Force in which a review of police records found that boys comprised 17% of victims of child sexual abuse; moreover, in a public school program designed by the Task Force to assist children in reporting possible abuse, 46% of all sexual approaches towards children were toward boys. A Canadian commission has confirmed this higher rate of abuse suggesting that 31% of men have been sexually victimized at some time in their lives (Badgley, et al., 1984).

In attempting to understand male victims, most studies have focused on characteristics of the abuse. For example, boys are more likely to be verbally and physically threatened at older ages than girls (Farber, Showers, Johnson, Joseph, & Oshins, 1984). Girls are more likely to be threatened by family members than non-relatives with no difference for boys in the source of the threat . Younger relatives may be more likely to abuse boys while older relatives may be more likely to abuse girls (Reinhart, 1987). In addition, onset of abuse may be somewhat different as boys report fairly level rates of abuse across different ages while girls evidence a bimodal distribution (i.e., greater incidence about age 6 and again in adolescence) (DeJong, Hervada, & Emmett, 1983). No other differences have been found on such factors as relationship of abuser to victim, sex of the abuser, number of abusers, chronicity of abuse, and physical violence concurrent with the abuse (Farber, et al., 1984). The relationship of the perpetrator also is similar for boys and girls, about 40% being a relative and 60% being a non-relative but typically known to the victim (Reinhart, 1987).

Adult males and females who were abused as children appear to have similar needs with the major difference being in how those needs are expressed (Bruckner and Johnson, 1987). Consistent with gender role expectations, females are more internalized while males are more

externalized. Males show more outward aggression, display more anger than depression or guilt, and are more action-oriented such as educating others about abuse or confronting the perpetrator.

Since so little work has been done examining the psychological characteristics of males, it was difficult to make specific predictions. However, consistent with the literature on adult victims, it was expected that the consequences of abuse for male and female adolescents would be similar but that males would be more likely to externalize their problems while females would be more likely to internalize their problems.

Method

Subjects

Sexually abused adolescents. Subjects ranged in age from 12 to 18. All subjects and their therapists granted consent to participate in this study. Sexually abused males were obtained from two groups, one a Sons United group (n = 7) and the other a residential correctional facility for adolescent males (n = 6). Males were likely to have experienced fondling, exposure, or anal intercourse with either the natural father or someone outside the family being the abuser. Sexually abused females (n = 16) were obtained from Daughters United groups. Females were likely to have experienced vaginal intercourse or fondling with the stepfather being the most common abuser.

No differences between males and females were found on the following characteristics. The reported number of times the victim had been abused ranged from one time to more than 20. Age at which abuse began ranged from under age five to age 14 with length of time of abuse ranging from less than one year to more than five years. Age of the abuser ranged from an adolescent to an adult over age 50. The majority of the abusers were male with only two identified as female. Physical force, either used or threatened, was reported in eight cases.

Contrast groups. Subjects ranged in age from 12 to 18. Two groups, males (n = 14) and females (n = 21), were obtained. Junior and senior high school students were contacted and completed the study as part of a class project. The students, their parents, the teacher, and a school administrator granted consent for the students to participate in the study.

Instruments

Demographics. Subjects were given a questionnaire to determine age, sex, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status (SES). Hollingshead's (1975) Four Factor Index of Social Status was used as the measure of SES. This index takes into account education, occupation, gender, and marital status.

Abuse history. A checklist was presented to the therapist of the abused subjects to ascertain the nature of the abuse (e.g., fondling, vaginal intercourse, anal intercourse, etc.), the relationship of the abuser to the victim, whether force or violence was used or threatened, the length of time over which the abuse occurred, and the age of the victim when the abuse began.

Clinical Analysis Questionnaire (CAQ). The first part of the CAQ (Krug & Cattell, 1980) is patterned after Cattell's 16PF, yielding a description of general personality characteristics. Only the second part, which pertains to clinical syndromes and was considered more relevant for this study, was administered here. This part contains 12 clinical scales: (a) hypochondriasis, (b) suicidal depression, (c) agitation, (d) anxious depression, (e) low energy depression, (f) guilt and resentment, (g) boredom and withdrawal, (h) paranoia, (i)

psychopathic deviation, (j) schizophrenia, (k) psychasthenia, and (l) psychological inadequacy. The subject is generally given three choices (e.g., true, in between, false) to each of 144 items.

Test-retest reliabilities over one-day intervals range from .67 to .90 (M = .79). Validity studies indicate that certain scales on the CAQ correlate with MMPI scales (e.g., hypochondriasis on the CAQ with Scale 1 (Hs) on the MMPI, r = .48). Other studies have examined various criterion groups. For example, child abusers have profiles that are significantly elevated on the paranoia, guilt and resentment, psychasthenia, and schizophrenia scales.

School Motivation Analysis Test (SMAT). The SMAT (Krug, Cattell, & Sweney, 1976), intended specifically for adolescents, yields scores on 10 characteristics, six of which are considered primary drives (assertiveness, mating, fear, narcism, pugnacity/sadism, and protectiveness) and four of which are considered acquired interest patterns (self-sentiment, superego, sentiment to school, sentiment to home). Four scores are provided for each scale. First, the Unintegrated score represents the drive or need level for each characteristic. Second, the Integrated score represents the extent to which that need has been satisfied. Third, the Total Motivational score indicates the energy invested in each of the characteristics. Fourth, the Conflict score indicates either an external conflict with environmental factors or an internal conflict around each of the characteristics. The Unintegrated and Integrated scores are considered primary scores while the Motivational and Conflict scores are considered secondary scores. Finally, there are five Derivative scores, yielding one score for each of the ten characteristics. These include Total Personal Interest, Total Integration, Total Conflict, Total Autism/Optimism, and General Information/Intelligence. Thus, the SMAT yields a total of 45 scores.

The SMAT, containing 190 statements, has three types of statements, the first two of which were used in this study. The first, "Uses", asks the subject the way in which they would choose to use a given commodity. For example, "With several hundred dollars, I would (a) go on an ocean voyage or (b) put it in the bank. The second, "Paired Choices", asks the subject to choose a word that goes most naturally with a stimulus word. For example, "Short (a) stop or (b) time." The third, "Knowledge", measures general intellectual ability in which a correct response is selected from four alternatives. For example, "Who invented horse racing? (a) Edison (b) Newton (c) Arabs (d) Romans.

Test-retest reliabilities over a one-week interval range from .32 to .95 (M = .57). Generally, lower reliabilities are found on the motivation scores which is expected given that these scores measure the energy which an inidividual is expending to satisfy a need at any particular time. The reliabilities for the other scores tend to be higher. The SMAT has been most predictive of performance in academic subjects. In addition, as would be expected as adolescents grow older, become more independent, and less connected to family and school, unintegrated scores on the School Sentiment, Home Sentiment, Fear, and Pugnacity measures decrease.

Procedure

Instruments for the sexually abused children were administered by the therapist at the therapy groups or by the psychologist at the correctional facility. Sexually abused subjects completed the demographic questionnaires and either the CAQ or the SMAT being administered on the same day. The test not given on the first administration was administered on another day with the test interval varying from one to five weeks. This was done to control for order

effects on the CAQ and SMAT. For those subjects in the residential facility, all instruments were administered shortly after entering the facility.

For the contrast subjects, a similar presentation was followed with one exception. The SMAT was broken into two parts due to time constraints, with the "Uses" and "Paired Choices" being completed on the first day and "Knowledge" on the second day.

The test materials were distributed and the test instructions were read by the test administrator who then answered any questions. The abused subjects were told that results of the tests would be shared with the therapist who would then share the results with the subject. They were informed that in all other respects the results were anonymous and would be used in a study to enable therapists to better understand and help sexual abuse victims. The contrast subjects were told that normative data from adolescents was needed for these instruments.

Following completion of the testing, contrast subjects were debriefed about the broader purposes of the study. Both groups were again given the opportunity to ask additional questions and to request follow-up information regarding the results of the study.

Results

To assess possible differences between the abused and contrast groups, 2 (group: abused, contrast) X 2 (gender: male, female) factorial analyses of variance were conducted over socioeconomic status (SES) and age. For SES, a significant main effect for gender was revealed, $F(1, 58) = 4.00$, $p < .05$, as females ($M = 47.1$) reported higher SES than did males ($M = 41.1$). A significant main effect was also found for abuse, $F(1, 58) = 25.55$, $p < .01$, as the contrast group ($M = 50.6$) was significantly higher in SES than the abused group ($M = 36.7$). These scores indicated that the typical abused subject reported having parents engaged in skilled crafts, clerical tasks, or sales, while the typical contrast subject reported having parents engaged in medium size businesses or were minor professional and technical workers.

For age, a significant abuse by gender interaction was found, $F(1, 58) = 5.56$, $p < .05$, indicating that contrast group males ($M = 16.1$) were significantly older than abused males ($M = 14.1$) with neither group significantly different from the abused females ($M = 14.9$) or the contrast females ($M = 14.5$). The Tukey HSD procedure (Jaccard, Becker, & Wood, 1984) was used for this and all other pairwise multiple comparisons.

CAQ Scores.

To assess possible differences on the CAQ, 2 (group: abused, contrast) X 2 (gender: male, female) multivariate factorial analyses of covariance were conducted over the CAQ scores. To control for the differences previously demonstrated, SES and age were used as a covariate. Multivariate analyses were used on the CAQ and the SMAT to control for possible Type I errors due to the number of dependent variables. Wilks' Lambda was used as the multivariate statistic for this and all subsequent analyses.

A significant multivariate main effect was found for abuse, $F(12, 45) = 3.38$, $p < .001$ (see Table 1). Subsequent univariate analyses indicated that the abused subjects reported (CAQ scale is in parentheses): (a) more somatic concerns (Hypochondriasis), (b) that life is meaningless and that self-destructive thoughts offer an escape from a hopeless situation (Suicidal Depression), (c) more feelings of confusion and awkwardness, lack of self-confidence, and an inability to cope adequately with demands placed on them (Anxious Depression), (d) blaming themselves when things go wrong and resentment towards others (Guilt and Resentment), and (e) that they are more likely to

feel depressed and avoid other people (Boredom and Withdrawal). They also reported that they are (a) more suspicious of others, believe that they are unfairly punished, and believe that others are only motivated by selfishness (Paranoia), (b) rejected by unsympathetic others and show a more extreme withdrawl from reality (Schizophrenia), (c) have obsessions about things beyond their control (Psychasthenia), and (d) have a distorted sense of self-worth and perceive that others judge them unfairly, to the extent that they may perceive themselves as helpless (Psychological Inadequacy).

The multivariate main effect for gender was also significant, $F(12, 45) = 1.99$, $p < .05$. Only one univariate effect was found for gender. On the Schizophrenia scale, $F(1, 56) = 4.15$, $p < .05$, males ($M = 9.1$) reported a more extreme withdrawal from reality and feelings of unreality than did females ($M = 6.7$).

SMAT Scores

To assess possible differences on the SMAT, 2 (group: abused, contrast) X 2 (gender: male, female) multivariate factorial analyses of covariance, using SES and age as covariates, were conducted over each of the following sets of SMAT scores: (a) Unintegrated scores, (b) Integrated scores, (c) Total Motivation scores, (d) Conflict scores, and (e) Derivative scores.

Abuse main effects. Subjects differed on Integrated but not on Unintegrated scores, $F(10,47) = 2.43$, $p < .05$ (see Table 2), indicating that the two groups differed in the satisfaction of a number of areas but did not differ in the motivation or effort expended to meet needs in each of these areas. Subsequent univariate analyses indicated that abused subjects reported less satisfaction in their (a) involvement with and activities with opposite gender friends (Mating), (b) ability to avoid painful and fearful situations and loss of parental affection (Fear), (c) having a good reputation and being liked by others (Self-Sentiment), (d) ability to please others and contribute to the society (Superego), and (e) involvement in school both inside and outside of the classroom (Sentiment to School).

In addition, a significant multivariate effect was found on the Total Motivation scores, $F(10, 47) = 2.28$, $p < .05$. Abused subjects indicated that they invested less energy in (a) having a good reputation and being liked by others (Self-Sentiment), (b) pleasing others and contributing to the society (Superego), and (c) school related issues (Sentiment to School) than did the contrast subjects.

Finally, a significant multivariate effect was found on the Derivative scores, $F(5, 52) = 3.63$, $p < .01$. Abused subjects reported (a) less general information (General Information), (b) less satisfaction with their lives and difficulty in satisfying their needs relative to their drive level (Total Integration), (c) less interest in a variety of areas than did contrast subjects (Total Personal Interest), and (d) more unmet needs and frustration (Total Conflict).

Gender main effects. As with abuse, subjects differed on the Integrated but not the Unintegrated scores with regard to gender. On the Integrated scores (see Table 3), a significant multivariate effect was found, $F(10, 47) = 3.03$, $p < .01$. Subsequent univariate analyses indicated that males reported (a) greater satisfaction with self-assertiveness and competency (Assertiveness) and (b) that they are more belligerent, possibly out of frustration (Pugnacity). Females reported greater satisfaction with (a) friendships with opposite gender peers (Mating), (b) their physical attributes (Narcism), (c) protectiveness and kindness toward others (Protectiveness), and (d) greater attachment to home and family life (Sentiment to Home).

On the Conflict scores, a significant multivariate effect approached significance, $F(10, 47) = 1.83$, $p < .10$. Subsequent

significant univariate analyses indicated that males reported more conflict over relationships with females (Mating) while females reported more conflict over fighting and aggressiveness (Pugnacity).

Interactions. A significant multivariate effect was found for the interaction on Total Motivation scores, $F(10, 47) = 2.52$, $p < .05$. Subsequent univariate analyses indicated that, on the Assertiveness scale, $F(1, 56) = 14.20$, $p < .01$, abused females ($M = 8.0$) reported less energy invested in self-assertiveness than did the contrast females ($M = 11.4$), contrast males ($M = 11.1$), or abused males ($M = 10.3$). On the Self-Sentiment scale, $F(1, 56) = 6.53$, $p < .01$, contrast males ($M = 11.6$) reported more energy invested towards a good reputation and being liked by others than did abused males ($M = 7.8$), abused females ($M = 9.5$), or contrast females ($M = 9.4$).

Discussion

These results clearly indicated that the sample of sexually abused adolescents studied here evidenced the adverse characteristics associated with child sexual abuse. Abused adolescents demonstrated greater feelings of meaninglessness, a lack of self-efficacy, more depression, less trust and greater avoidance of others, and a greater sense of lack of control over their lives. Abused children also felt more isolated from others and not as able to avoid painful or fearful situations.

Finkelhor and Browne (1985) have offered a theoretical model in understanding the traumatic effects of sexual abuse. They suggest that the abused individual experiences what they call "traumagenic dynamics". First is traumatic sexualization, a disruption of the child's sexuality in a developmentally inappropriate and interpersonally dysfunctional way. Consistent with this view, in the present study sexually abused adolescents reported significantly greater dissatisfaction with relationships involving opposite gender peers than did contrast subjects. Second is betrayal, in which the abused children feel deceived and harmed by an important individual on whom they have been dependent. Consistent with this view, abused adolescents reported more guilt and resentment and more fear than did contrast subjects. Third is powerlessness, a process in which the child's volition and sense of self-competence are undermined. Numerous scales supported this dynamic. For example, on the CAQ, abused adolescents reported more suicidal depression, more withdrawal, feelings of unreality, and a sense of learned helplessness than did contrast subjects. On the SMAT, abused adolescents indicated less satisfaction with their social reputations and less energy invested in trying to maintain social status. Finally, is stigmatization, in which the child incorporates into the self-image the negative connotations associated with sexual abuse. On the CAQ, abused subjects indicated greater feelings of experiencing something unpardonable and the worthlessness associated with this experience. While certainly not a direct test of the Finkelhor and Browne model, these differences between abused and contrast subjects are certainly supportive.

The scores on the SMAT also yield some interesting patterns. It should be remembered that remembered that the SMAT yields four scores for each characteristic. The greatest number of differences was found on the Integrated scores, which suggest that an individual has not satisfied a particular need, and the Total Motivation scores, which indicate the energy invested in a particular need. No significant differences were found on the Unintegrated scores, which suggest the need or drive attached to a characteristic, and the Conflict scores, which are related to the conflict around a particular need. This pattern suggests that, in a number of important ways, sexually abused adolescents have not had their needs met. This has not resulted in

their having greater needs or drives or even greater conflict about these needs. Instead, this lack of satisfaction has resulted in decreased energy expended. This suggests disappointment and something akin to a "learned helplessness" response. The adolescent feels unfulfilled but does not feel that increased effort will change the situation.

What is most important with regard to the present study is that there was only one difference between male and female abused adolescents. On the SMAT Total Motivation score for the assertiveness scale, sexually abused females indicated that they invested less energy in assertiveness than did abused males and the contrast subjects. These results suggest that sexual abuse is so salient and traumatic that it overrides gender differences to a large extent.

There clearly is a need for more extensive research to examine the potential differences between sexually abused males and females. For example, sexually abused children in treatment must be compared to those not in treatment. As with most studies of abused children, some of the results of the present study must be tempered by the fact that only abused adolescents who had at least begun treatment were used. The problems in obtaining such a non-clinical sample are twofold. First, as with most non-clinical samples, such a group would be more difficult to locate. Second, and most problematic, are the ethical issues involved. If the child is identified as abused but not in treatment, the researcher is faced with the duty to report. It is likely that treatment affects the individual's perceptions, especially towards self and family, to which the CAQ and SMAT would be sensitive. Measuring an individual's perceptions at the beginning of treatment is a possible alternative although this has its own difficulties.

Second, the course of treatment may be different for males and females. While each may be affected in a similar way by the abuse, they may need to be dealt with differently. Males and females will tend to express their distress differently with males being more external and females more internal. This may require differential treatment strategies in spite of the fact that the psychological sequelae of the abuse is similar.

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Table 1

Abuse Main Effects for CAQ Scores

Scale	F	Abused	Contrast
Hypochondriasis	6.78*	9.3	3.5
Suicidal Depression	4.87*	9.7	3.8
Anxious Depression	4.88*	11.2	7.3
Guilt and Resentment	12.70**	12.3	5.7
Boredom and Withdrawal	5.88*	9.1	4.5
Paranoia	20.52**	12.3	5.7
Schizophrenia	25.46**	11.6	4.7
Psychasthenia	11.65**	12.2	7.4
Psychological Inadequacy	8.82**	11.5	4.7

Note. df = 1, 56 for all scales.

*p<.05. **p<.01.

Table 2

Abuse Main Effects for SMAT Scores

Scale	F	Abused	Contrast
	Integrated Scores		
Mating	3.08*	8.5	9.5
Fear	3.20*	5.2	6.2
Self-Sentiment	4.54**	6.7	7.9
Superego	7.65***	6.4	8.7
Sentiment to School	4.61**	7.0	8.6
	Total Motivation Scores		
Self-Sentiment	3.90**	8.7	10.3
Superego	6.69***	9.3	12.6
Sentiment to School	5.09**	9.5	11.8
	Derivative Scores		
General Information	17.99***	24.3	34.4
Total Integration	6.93***	-7.3	1.2
Total Personal Interest	11.33***	49.4	55.7
Total Conflict	8.01***	56.9	50.7

Note. df = 1, 56 for all scales.

*p<.10. **p<.05. ***p<.01.

Table 3

Gender Main Effects for Mean SMAT Scores

Scale	F	Male	Female
	Integrated Scores		
Assertiveness	11.48**	7.5	6.3
Mating	12.93**	8.0	9.8
Narcism	7.45**	8.1	9.6
Pugnacity	5.96*	8.3	6.8
Protectiveness	10.67**	6.7	8.1
Sentiment to Home	4.10*	6.0	6.9
	Conflict Scores		
Mating	12.64**	.8	-1.1
Pugnacity	4.48*	-1.3	.4

Note. df = 1, 56 for all scales.

*p<.05. **p<.01.